

THE MISSION OF AFFLICTION

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*“Let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.
It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction,
and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.”
2 Samuel 16:11-12*

THE bright side of David's character was generally seen either when he was actively engaged or when he was greatly suffering. He was the man for action. When he ran to meet Goliath, and returned with the giant's head in his hand, or when it was needful that he should lead forth the hosts of God to war against Philistia, then David was in his element. He was one who never feared the face of man. He was courageous, dauntless, and full of confidence in God.

Equally well does he stand out in the time of his trouble. He will not lift up his hand against Saul even when the king is in his power. If he cuts off the skirt of Saul's robe, even then his heart smites him. When his adversaries are before him and with a blow he can put them to death, with unusual magnanimity he restrains his hand and will not touch them. Revenge was not in his spirit. He was full of gentleness and tenderness.

It is well for men of this kind when they have something to do or something to suffer. And this perhaps may account for it, that men have to be very busy or very faithful, if they are to avoid being sinful. There are spirits so ardent, so fervent, that unless they have either to do or to bear God's will with a high degree of intensity, they are lacking in brightness and cheerfulness.

David was seldom at leisure without falling into mischief. His great sin, his grievous sin was on this wise. It was the time when kings went forth to battle, but David sent Joab to fight against Ammon and he stayed at home. We read that at eventide, “David arose from off his bed and walked upon the roof of his house.” He had become luxurious and then it was that temptation came and he fell.

His second great offense was very much after the same order. He had subdued all his enemies. The rebellion of Absalom was put down with a strong hand. All was quiet within and without—and then Satan moved him to number the people. He thought, “I am the king of a great country and I should like to know how many subjects I have. I should like to know how many troops I have. Joab, go and take a census and bring it to me, that I may understand how great I am.”

And then it was that God sent His servant to warn him that He would chasten him for his pride of heart, and He gave him the choice of three chastisements—one of which must fall upon the people. David was like a sword, which if hung up on a wall, would soon gather rust, but when he was moved to fight the Master's battle, he was of wondrous keen temper, and could cut to the dividing asunder of the joints and the marrow. Let us dread, then, ease and repose.

*“For, more the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests hanging over head.”*

Let us be afraid of having nothing to *do* and be thankful for something to *suffer*, if we have not something to do actively, for, let us alone and the best of us will corrode. And if I am addressing any man who has lately given up business and is enjoying repose, I would urge upon him the wisdom of

seeking some service for Christ which would engage his faculties, for it is true of Christians as well as other people, that,

*“Satan always mischief finds,
For idle hands to do.”*

Our text tonight exhibits David in the time of his trouble, and he is here so admirable, and his conduct is here so commendable, that I hold him up as an example to all. There are four things in this transaction which we all ought to copy. The first was the *absence of resentment* from the heart of David. The second was *his entire resignation to the divine will*. The third was *his expectancy from God alone*. And the fourth was *his looking to the bright side and having hope still*.

I. First, then, ADMIRE DAVID AND THEN TRY TO COPY HIM IN THIS RESPECT.

We read you the story just now. Now the attack of Shimei upon David was very cowardly. David had been king for many years, but you never hear a word from Shimei while the king was on his throne and in power. This man was skulking in the farthest corners of the land, no doubt often biting his tongue, but having too much sense to use it against the powerful king.

But now that David is fleeing from the palace and his son is pursuing him, eager for his blood, out comes this coward from his skulking place and begins to accuse the king. Those who would not have dared to speak against David before, now abuse him to his face with opprobrious epithets. It is very hard to bear a cowardly attack. One is very apt to reply and use hard words to one who takes advantage of your position and deals you the coward's blow. Only the coward strikes a man when he is down.

It is just possible that somebody here may be suffering from an injury which he knows the person responsible for it would not have dared to inflict in years gone by. That helps to make the blow more cutting—when it comes from a coward's hands.

Besides being so cowardly, it was so brutal. We pity a man that is in distress. When a king has lost his throne, when a father has his own child in rebellion against him, one says, “Whatever may have been his fault, this is not the time to mention them.” When the poor heart is bleeding and the man is already suffering the very extremity of misery, who would wish to add a single ounce to the crushing weight that he has to carry? Sympathy and common humanity seem to say, “Be quiet! Hush! Another time, when he mounts again to prosperity, then, if it is needful, let us faithfully rebuke him for his faults, but not now. It is not seemly.”

If this dog of a Shimei must fly at David when he is suffering, most surely Satan himself must have set him on to aggravate to the last degree the miseries of David. And yet David has not one hard word to say against him. Nay, he becomes his advocate, bears with the brutal attack—cowardly as it was—betrays no temper, but peacefully, calmly, gratefully spares the life which was in his hand.

Moreover, remember that the attack was especially a false one. He called David a bloody man and accused him of having destroyed the house of Saul. Nothing could have been more false, for when Saul was in David's power on two occasions, once in the cave and once when he lay asleep on the slope of the mountain, David did not put out his hand to touch the Lord's anointed.

When Saul and Jonathan were slain on Gilboa, David sincerely mourned and wrote that pathetic elegy—the song which he bade them learn to sing in mourning for Saul, who fell on the high places. And afterwards, when the Amalekite came with the crown of Saul, hoping to be rewarded, David had him put to death on the spot. When wicked men came with the head of Ish-bosheth, hoping to gratify David, he slew them both for the murder.

Moreover, he sought out Mephibosheth, and though he was lame in both his feet and could not stand, he bade him sit at his table and did him honor. So far from being a bloody man, he had, on the contrary, been hunted by Saul and his blood had been sought by the leader of that house, yet had he never returned evil for evil.

It is very hard to be reproached for what you do not do. I do not know how, but somehow the falseness of an accusation does put a degree of sting into it. I have heard of a woman who was charged

with a certain degree of dishonesty. Her minister said to her, “You need not be so grieved about it if it is not true.” “No, sir,” she said, “I should not be grieved about it, if it were not true, but there’s the point about it, it *is* true.”

And just so, if we were sensible, we should only feel those charges that are true and the edge would be taken off others when we knew our conscience did not justify them. But it does not happen to be so. We do not hold the scales well. We feel that it is a very cruel thing to have things laid to our charge that we knew nothing of—and when our whole life has been in one direction—to have it laid to our door that we act quite contrary to that is a very stinging thing.

Shimei, I suppose, could not have uttered anything that could sting David more to the quick, than when he said to him, “Thou art a bloody man and hast destroyed the house of Saul.” Yet David did not put out his hand to him. He said, “Let him alone! Let him curse.” Magnanimously he suffered him to escape unscathed, though he cast stones and dirt upon him.

Sometimes the way in which a thing is put is more cutting than the thing itself. For Shimei did not merely speak his charge against David, but he put it in the bitterest way, “Come out, come out!” as though he scorned him. And then he threw stones and dirt at him, as though he did not mind him now, as though he thought David the very dust beneath his feet and called him the offscouring of all things.

Few among us can bear scorn. I suppose that a bitter sarcasm often stings where a downright charge, however false, might not have done so. A little bit of ridicule, with malice in it, will often wound, and little do we know how many may have gone with broken hearts all their days through unkind words that have been spoken, perhaps half in jest, but which, being taken in earnest, have made terrible wounds in the soul. Yet David would not be provoked by this man’s lies nor by the tones in which he spoke them—but like a true king, all royal as he was, he said, “Let him alone. Let him curse. It is hard to bear, but I will bear it still.”

Now be it recollected that David *could very easily have put an end to all this*. It was in his power to put an end to Shimei at once. “Off with his head,” said Abishai—and there would have been the end of the argument. Sometimes we are very patient with things we cannot cure. It is good sound doctrine, “What can’t be cured, must be endured.” And “Stooping down as needs he must, who cannot sit upright.”

If you cannot prevent, you may as well forgive—every fool will adopt that unless he be a strange fool indeed. But David could take this fellow’s head off and that in a moment, and yet he said, “Let him alone. Let him curse.” And this makes a splendid example. If *you can revenge yourself*, DON’T. If you could do it as easily as open your hand, keep it shut. If one bitter word could end the argument, ask for divine grace to spare that bitter word.

Reflect, too, that *David was urged by others to put an end to this man*. Sometimes we follow advice readily, especially when there is something that we like in the advice. And who among us would not like the advice? I confess on reading that chapter that if I had been in Abishai’s case, I am afraid I should have taken his head off first, and asked permission afterwards. I am afraid it would have been very bad and wicked, but in such a case as that, when my dear king for whom I had lived and would have died—such a blessed king as David—was scoffed at by such a dog as that—what lifeguardsman would not have said, “Off with his head!” and have thought he did him too much honor in those rough days?

Yet David said, “No, we must not follow bad advice, we must not let the zeal of earnest friends lead us too fast.” If they are too fast, we must be too slow. In all matters of vengeance, if others would go forward, we must draw back and say, “Christ has bidden us forgive even to seventy times seven,” and so will we do.

Recollect this is under the old dispensation, when the law said, “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” and so on—and therefore David might have been more excused if he had avenged himself. But he seems to have caught, like a prophet, the light of the coming time, and spared the man as Christ would have spared him, if He had been there. In this he is to be copied by us all.

To gather all up in one, beloved, if the trouble that comes to you, comes to you as a second cause, don't look at the second cause so as to quarrel with it and don't say, "I would not mind if it had been So-and-so." That is why God selected So-and-so to chasten you, for when a father wants to make a child smart, he gets his heaviest rod.

And so does God. He has taken up that instrument which will make you smart and cry out most. It is always foolish for us to fret about the second cause. If you threaten a dog with a stick, he bites the stick—but if he were a sensible dog—he would bite you, only he does not know any better and so he bites the stick, and if we rebel against the second cause we are in error. If there is anyone we should complain against, it would be God who uses the instrument, and as we cannot, and would not if we could complain against Him, it is best for us to say as David did, "Let him alone! Let him curse! The Lord has bidden him. The Lord has bidden him."

Now don't we tonight say, "I could have borne that other trial if God had sent that"? Well, *accept your present trial* and oh! if you are vexed with So-and-so, forgive him. There is a higher hand than his in this matter. It is a rough knife that you have been pruned with, but it is the gardener that used the knife—and your God is using this affliction for your good. Don't look at the affliction so much as at the end and at the design of God.

It was very beautiful for David to make excuses for Shimei. Notice how he puts it. "Well, there is Absalom, my son—he is seeking my life. No wonder that this man should! He is no relation of mine. I could not expect love from him. And then, moreover," he said, "he is a Benjamite. Now God has been pleased to put me, David, into the place of Saul that was a Benjamite, and of course this man sympathizes with the tribe that has lost the royal crown."

David put his finger on the secret. "The man has been a sufferer through me, therefore he is angry, he is estranged from me. I could not expect gentle treatment from him, and I have unconsciously, without intending to injure him, taken away some authority from the family to which he belongs, and therefore I can somewhat shut my eyes to his hard treatment of me, and at any rate, I will show that God is using him as an instrument and will freely forgive him."

Now I am talking very simply and upon simple conduct, but I am sorrowfully conscious that a great many Christian people want to be preached to about giving lessons to others. As soon as ever a child learns to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven," which is a little infant's prayer—he is taught to say, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us"—and yet I find that some who have been Christians for years—at least they say they have—if they get a little put out about some insignificant trifle, take a long time to get their feathers smooth again. Perhaps it is something they need hardly have noticed, and yet they will go fretting about it day after day.

Oh, let us be men, and let us be Christian men, and let us be able to forbear! "In many things we offend all." "It needs be that offenses come, but woe unto that man by whom the offense cometh." I think it is equal woe unto that man who will not let the offense go away. Someone says, "I suppose somebody must have been offended here." I am sure I don't know of anybody, but if the cap fits, let them wear it. May we ever learn to forgive as we hope to be forgiven.

II. Now the second thing is this—DAVID'S COMPLETE RESIGNATION TO THE DIVINE WILL.

"It is enough for me that the LORD hath bidden him," or as in the tenth verse, "Let him curse, because the LORD has said unto him, 'Curse David.'" David felt very keenly the wicked act of his enemy, but he felt that it was sent for his further chastisement and therefore he accepted it willingly. I daresay he said to himself "I don't deserve this charge, it is a very base one, but if Shimei had known all about me, he might have charged me with something quite as bad as that would have been quite correct."

When we are railed at by graceless men and they slander us, we may say to ourselves "Well, well, if they did but know us altogether and could see our hearts, they could perhaps have said something worse against us—so we will be well content to bear this." For David, though Shimei did not know about it,

had sinned grievously. It does not make Shimei's conduct any better, but David felt, "I have deserved this at the hands of the Lord, or something else if not on this particular occasion." Then feeling it was the Lord, he said to himself "I do not see the meaning of this, but I am sure there is love in it. Did God ever do anything to His children except in love? I do not see the necessity of it, but I am certain there is wisdom in it. Did the Lord ever do anything to his children that was not right? I do not see the benefit that may come out of it to me, but did God ever exercise His children with fruitless trials?" *Is there not a divine necessity and a needs be for all chastisements?* It is the Lord—that is enough for David.

Brethren and sisters, is that enough for you? The Lord has done it, shall I open my mouth again when I know my Father did it? Did He take my child? Well, blessed be His name, that He loved my little one so well! Did He take my gold? Well, He only lent it to me and a thing borrowed ought to go laughing back to its owner. Let Him take back what He lent. He gives and blessed be His name, He takes but what He gave. Therefore let Him still be praised.

David seems to me, as it were, to have lain down before God under a sense of having done wrong in days gone past and said to Him, "My Father, chasten me just as You will. My rebellious spirit is humbled before You. If it be necessary for my good that I suffer from Your hand this affliction and a thousand others, go on, go on! Your child may weep, but he will not complain. Your child may suffer, but he will bring no charge against You. What You please to do, it shall be my pleasure to bear. Your pleasure and my pleasure shall be one pleasure henceforth and forevermore. If the Lord has done it, so let it be."

I invite every troubled brother and sister here to *cry for grace from God to be able to see God's hand in every trial and then for grace, seeing God's hand, to submit at once to it. Nay, not only to submit, but to acquiesce and to rejoice in it.* "It is the LORD, let him do what seemeth good to him." I think there is generally an end to troubles when we get to that, for when the Lord sees we are willing that He should do what He wills, then He takes back His hand and says, "I need not chasten My child—He submits himself to Me. What would have been effected by My chastisement is effected already and therefore I will not chasten him."

You know David was not long in the dark after he was condemned to be there. "Well," says the Lord, "if My child does not cry because he is left without a candle, he shall have his candle. Now I have tried him and proved him, he shall come before Me in the light."

What is the *use of our kicking and struggling against the Lord?* What benefit ever comes of our rebellion against Him? The ox and the mule which have no understanding have to be held in with bit and bridle. What comfort ever came to you from your rebellions and reluctances? And so with self-will and desiring to have your own way—what do you get from these but the scourge?

Oh! it is the happiest and most blessed condition to *lie passive in God's hands* and know no will but His—to feel a self-annihilation, in which self is not destroyed but is absorbed into God so that we delight in the inner man in the will of God and ever say, "Father, thy will be done." This is a hard lesson—far easier to preach about than to practice—and a great deal easier to think of when you have learnt it than to carry it out.

I am often reminded of an old friend, Will Richardson, I used to talk with. He said, "When it is winter time, I think I could mow and reap, and fancy if you were only to give Will the sickle and scythe, what a splendid day's work he would do. That is in the winter, but in the summer I have not been half a day at work before I begin to feel that my poor old bones won't stand much more work and to think that I am hardly the man for a farm laborer."

Now so it is with our own strength. If we fell back upon the strength of God, we should be strong when we are weak, but when we fancy we are getting stronger, we are very much weaker, and might very often measure ourselves in the inverse ratio of what we think.

III. DAVID IS TO BE IMITATED IN ANOTHER RESPECT, NAMELY, THAT HIS EXPECTATION WAS FROM GOD ONLY.

Notice the text, “It may be that the LORD will look upon mine affliction.” There was Abishai ready to take off this man’s head, but David said, “It may be that the LORD will look upon my affliction.” He thought that when he was in such great trouble, God would surely have pity upon him. Oh, you tried ones, look away once for all from man to your God. “My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.”

There are two ways of going to a place. One is to go round and the other is to go straight. Now the straight road is the shortest cut. And there are two ways of getting help. The one is to go round to all your friends and get disappointed—and then go to God at last. The other is to go to God at first. That is the shortest cut.

God can make your friends help you afterwards. Seek first God and His righteousness, and the help of friends will be added afterwards. Straight forward makes the best running. Out of all troubles, the surest deliverance is from God’s right hand. Therefore from all troubles, the readiest way to escape is to draw near to God in prayer. Go not to this friend or that, but pour out your story before God. Remember how the poet puts it—

*“Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent;
Our cheerful song would oftener be,
Hear what the Lord has done for me.”*

Human friends fail us. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack and the most faithful heart will sometimes waver—and when there is most need of our friends, we find that they fail us. But our God is eternal and omnipotent—whoever has ever trusted in Him in vain? Where is the man that can say, I looked upon Him and hoped in Him, and I am ashamed of my hope?

The beauty of David’s looking alone to God came out in this quite calmly and quietly. He said to himself, “God will get me out of this,” therefore he was not angry with Shimei. He did not want his head to be cut off or anything of the sort. “*God will do it.*” Oh, that is the man for life, that is the man for death, that is the man for smooth waters, and that is the man for storms, who lives upon his God.

If a man keeps in that frame of mind, what can disturb him? Though the mountains were cast into the midst of the sea and the earth were moved, yet still would he in patience possess his soul and still be calm, for of such a man, I may say, “His soul shall dwell at ease, his seed shall inherit the earth.” At destruction and famine, he will laugh. God has given His angels charge concerning such a man to keep him in all his ways, for this is the man that dwells in the secret places of the most High and he shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

The Lord says of him, “Because he hath set his love upon Me therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high because he has known My name. He has proved it by trusting in Me, and Me alone, therefore will I never fail him, neither shall he suffer long.” “Trust ye in the LORD alone, for in the Lord JEHOVAH there is everlasting strength.”

Gather up your confidences, make them into one confidence and fix them all on Him. Lean not here and there—you will grow crooked in yourself and the staff you lean on shall turn to a spear and pierce you. Lean wholly upon God, and as He is everywhere, you shall stand upright in leaning upon Him. This shall be the uprightness of your ways that you stay yourself on the Rock of Ages. May we learn this lesson. It is a high one. May the Spirit of God teach it to us.

IV. Now the last of the four lessons is this—DAVID LEARNED TO LOOK AT THE BRIGHT SIDE.

What is the bright side of trouble? What is the bright side of your trouble, dear friend? Well, I don’t know what you would call the bright side, but David considered the bright side of his trouble to be the black side—and I think every man who walks by faith knows that to be so. If you read the text you see it at once, “It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and will requite me good for his cursing this day.”

Much as if he said, “Though my affliction is so very bitter, God will pity me.” So the black side is the bright one. “This man has cursed me. That will move God to come to my side and defend me.” So the black side is the bright one again.

There is a sailor and the tide has ebbed out altogether. “Now,” he says, “is the turning.” Those that watch at night are glad when it comes to the darkest, because they know it certainly cannot be darker—and they know that daylight is coming soon. The darkest part of the night is that which precedes the day. We have an old saying about the weather, “As the day lengthens, the cold strengthens.”

And so it does, but soon it will come to an end. The cold will soon yield. Be thankful when you have got into midwinter, because you cannot go any deeper—it will turn soon. Let us be glad of that. Now if in our blackest parts of sorrow there is brightness, there must be brightness elsewhere, and indeed, if we were half as inquisitive to find out that which will cheer us, as to discover that of which we may complain, we should soon have reasons of gratitude in the lowest and worst condition.

We rummage our affairs to find out something to distress ourselves about, ambitious to multiply our sorrows, diligent to increase our distresses, as though our woes were wealth and our sorrows were worth hoarding up. But if we turned that curiosity and inquisitiveness of ours into another channel, we should begin to find that there are diamonds in dark mines, pearls in rough oyster shells, rainbows that deck the brow of the storm, and blessings that come to us in the garb of curses.

We should soon have cause for joy. I suggest to our friends therefore, the *blessed habit of trying to find the silver lining of the dark cloud*—to look away from the black surface into the bright gleams, so that they may have reason to rejoice in the Most High.

To conclude—David was a glorious man. If instead of having expectation from God, he had only had confidence in his fellow men, and had gone about always repining and mourning and finding out the dark side of everything—well, he would have been a very small psalmist. In fact, I don’t think he could have written a psalm at all, except a poor one.

He would have been a poor king—a mere pigmy—and would never have shone out as a saint. Now if you, dear brother and sister, want to shine before God and be among the illustrious elect, whom the Lord makes as stars in the church’s history, *pray for patience towards men and patience towards God*. Pray for bright eyes to find out the light even in the darkness. Pray to always lean wholly upon God and stay yourself upon Him. You will glorify God in that way and you will be the means of bringing others to God.

Distrustful preachers do not win souls. Moaning and repining Sunday school teachers will not bring children to Christ. “The joy of the LORD is our strength.” The patience which makes us possess our souls gives us the fullness of the blessing of the Lord. The Lord teach us in that school—we are very foolish. The Lord strengthen us in His grace—we are very weak. And may all of us on earth live quietly and happily the risen life which our Savior did.

Now if I am speaking to any here tonight who are rebellious and do not love the Lord, I would remind them that *there is a cure for these maladies and that faith in Jesus Christ is that cure*. He that believes in Him shall find the water that flowed from His pierced side, to be of sin the double cure. May you have that cure—every one of you—for Jesu’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 43:1-7

In this chapter the Lord comforts His people. By His divine foresight He perceives that there are great and varied trials a little way ahead and therefore He prepares them for the ordeal. They are to go through rushing waters and flaming fires, and He kindly bids them not to be afraid. How often in God’s Word do we read those tender, gracious words, “*Fear not*”! Should not the trembling ones listen to the voice of their God and obey it when He says to them “*Fear not*”? It is not right for you who fear God to

fear anything else. Once brought to know the Lord, who can harm you? Abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, what danger need you dread? Nay, rather, be of good comfort and press forward with peaceful confidence, though floods and flames await you.

To encourage His people to rise superior to their fears, the gracious God goes on to issue matchless promises, *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.”* Present good, *“I will be with thee.”* Absent danger, *“they shall not overflow you.”* God stays His people’s hearts by His own promises.

In proportion to their faith, those promises will lift them up. If you do not believe the promise, you shall not be established by it. But if, with childlike confidence, you accept every word of God as true, then His word shall be to you the joy of your heart and the delight of your spirit, and you shall be a stranger to fear.

The Lord proceeds, after giving those promises, to set before them what He Himself is, and what He has done for them, and what they are to Him. He is speaking, of course, to Israel. And He says of Israel, His chosen nation, *“I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.”* What cause for fear now remains? All believers are of the true Israel.

Abraham was the father of the faithful. The faithful, or the believing, are therefore Abraham’s seed according to the promise. The seed was not after the flesh, else would the children of Ishmael have been the heirs of the covenant, but the true seed was born according to promise and in the power of God, for Isaac was born when his parents were old, by faith in the power of God. Isaac was not the child of flesh, but he was born according to promise, so that we who are not born of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, by His Spirit, and according to the divine promise, are the true children of Abraham.

We are the spiritual Israel. Though after the flesh Abraham be ignorant of us, and Sarah acknowledge us not, yet are we the true seed of him who was the father of believers. The literal Israel was the type of those chosen and favored ones who by faith are born again according to promise. To these heirs, according to promise, the Lord said, *“I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.”* Let us now meditate on this passage verse by verse.

Verse 1. *But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.*

“Fear not,” is a command of God and is a command which brings its own power of performance with it. God, who created and formed us, says to us, “Fear not,” and a secret whisper is heard in the heart by which that heart is so comforted that fear is driven away. Observe the tender ties that bind our God to His people—creation, the formation of them for His praise—redemption, the purchase of them for Himself and the calling of them by their name. The Lord remembers the bonds which unite us to Himself even when we forget them. He recollects His eternal love and all the deeds of mercy that have flowed from it. Though our memory is treacherous, and our faith is feeble, “yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.” Blessed be His holy name!

2. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.” The godly have the best company in the worst places in which their lot is cast. God’s presence is all that we need even in the deepest floods of tribulation. This He has promised to us. He does not say what He will do for us, but He does tell us that He will be with us, and that is more than enough to meet all our necessities.

“When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” That is a wonderful picture of a man walking through the fire and yet not being burned—but there was a greater wonder that was seen by Moses, which may well comfort us. He saw a bush that burned with fire and yet was not consumed. Now a bush in the desert is usually so dry that at the first application of fire, it flames, and glows, and is speedily gone.

Yet you and I who are, spiritually, just as dry and combustible as that bush was naturally, may burn, and burn, and burn, and yet we shall not be consumed, because the God who was in the bush, is also with us, and in us. *“Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”* You shall come out of the furnace as the three holy children did, with not so much as the smell of fire upon you, for where God is, all is safe.

3. *For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.*

“For I am the LORD thy God.” This is the grandest possible reason for not fearing. Fall back upon this when you have nothing else upon which to rely. If you have no goods, you have a God. If your gourd is withered, your God is still the same as He ever was. *“For I am JEHOVAH, thy God.”* *“I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.”* And He has given infinitely more than that for us who are now His people, for He gave His only-begotten Son that He might redeem us with His precious blood. Now that we have cost Him so much, is it likely that He will ever forsake us? It is not possible.

4. *Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.*

How sweetly this verse comes home to those whose characters have been disreputable! As soon as they are truly converted to Christ, they become *“honorable.”* *“Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable.”* God does not call His people by their old names of dishonor, but He gives them the title of, *“Right Honorable,”* and makes them the nobility of His Court. *“Unto you that believe he is an honour,”* and you have honor in Him and from Him.

5-7. *Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.*

“Fear not: for I am with thee.” This is the second time that the blessed words, *“Fear not,”* ring out like the notes of the silver trumpet proclaiming the jubilee to poor trembling hearts. *“Fear not, for I am with thee.”* The Lord seems to say to each troubled believer, *“My honor is pledged to secure your safety, all My attributes are engaged on your behalf right to the end. Yea, I am Myself with you, therefore, fear not.”*

“I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, my daughter from the ends of the earth; every one that is called by my name.” Whatever happens, God will be with His church. His own chosen people shall all be gathered in. There shall be no frustration of the divine purpose. From east or west, north or south, all His sons and daughters shall come unto Him, even every one that is called by His name.

“For I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.” And God will be glorified in His people. The object of their creation is the glory of their God, and that end shall, somehow or other, be answered in the Lord’s good time. The Lord seems to dwell upon that note of the creation of His children for His own glory. This accounts for many of our troubles and for all our deliverances—it is that God may be glorified by bringing His children through the fires and through the floods.

A life that was never tested by trial and trouble would not be a life out of which God would get much glory, but they that do business in the great waters see the works of God, and His wonders in the deep, and they give Him praise, and besides, when they come to their desired haven, then they praise the Lord for His goodness and God is thereby glorified.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.